

Chapter 22 from Another Point of View

by Rb

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Summary: 'Member Tom's and Jake's convo in #31? What if we saw it from the *real* Tom's point of view...

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>

>
 "Why couldn't they have had the funeral tomorrow?" my mouth said that night, when we were at Grandpa G's funeral. "I mean, Sunday or Monday, what's the difference?"

>
 < The one day in which you'll shrivel up and die, slug, > I sneered silently. < It'll come. And you'll die! You'll die! >

>
 < You'll die too, human, > it said. < Or be reinfested. >

>
 < We'll just see. >

>
 "Grandpa G wanted it that way," Jake said, unaware of the silent exchange between the Yeerk that inhabited my body and me. "And besides, Mom said they never bury people on Sunday around here. Sunday is for the wake, Monday for the funeral."

>
 "Yeah, well, it's stupid." < Stupid human tradition. >

>
 Jake was crouching in front of an old, dark, chest. "What're you doing?"

>
 "Nothing." He lifted a stack of books off a leather trunk. "Don't you remember this, Tom? This is Grandpa G's old footlocker."

>
 Jake opened the trunk. "Remember back, like, I don't know, when I was ten or so?" He was filled with a childlike innocence and urgency that made me want to cry. "He showed us his canteen and these pictures of his outfit from the Battle of the Bulge?"

>
 Of course I remembered. I had been Jake's age, and Jake had been nine or ten. Grandpa G had taken us both upstairs, and opened the footlocker and showed us what he'd kept for nearly fifty years, remnants from the war.

>
 At the time, I'd thought it was "So cool!" that my great-grandfather had been a hero in the war, and had all these

medals. I asked him, later, why he didn't display them. He just stared at me for a while and said I was a young fool.

>
 > And it was true. Now that I knew what war was like, I understood why he didn't. Because the memories eat inside of you until you're a hollow shell, and if you have the medals out there, you'll never be able to forget.

>
 > War isn't about medals. It's about killing and being ruthless and dying inside.

>
 > "Maybe," my mouth muttered.

>
 > "They didn't know whether they were gonna freeze or starve or get shot. That's what he said," Jake went on.

>
 > The Yeerk rolled my eyes, playing the part of an indifferent older brother perfectly.

>
 > "Christmas, when they were all homesick in their foxholes, they sang 'Silent Night'. The enemy sang it too, in German. Far off they heard it. Both sides lonely for their homes. Both sides wishing the war was over."

>
 > "Uh-huh."

>
 > "Don't you remember how he told us all this, Tom?" Jake pressed. Of course I did! All I could do was relive my memories! And I could see how stupid I was for not treasuring my family more! I was such a stupid fool!

>
 > "Vaguely. I'm not real big on old war stories."

>
 > Jake looked disappointed. He pulled out a box which held some of Grandpa G's medals. "He was a brave guy. He believed in honor. All that stuff out of old movies. Honor and courage and all."

>
 > Poor, innocent, naive Jake. How could I tell him that...that that's not true? How could I dash his ideals and his dreams and the fact that he thought that there was a rainbow behind every bend? How could I dash his optimism?

>
 > Of course, the Yeerk could.

>
 > "Yeah, well, that was a million years ago. Honor and courage aren't what matters, not in the real world. What matters is whether you win. After you win then you start talking about honor and courage. When you're in battle you do whatever you have to do. Honor and courage and all that? Those are the words you say after you've destroyed all your enemies and anyone else who gets in the way."

>
 > "You're wrong," Jake said stubbornly, defiantly. Clinging to his ideals in a world where there was none. You had to admire that.

>
 > < He is very stubborn. Like you, human. >

>
 > < He has a stronger will than me. He won't make a good host. Leave him alone. >

>
 > My eyes were rolled. "You're a kid." Suddenly, something caught the Yeerks attention. "What's this?" My hand reached into the footlocker and came up with a dagger. My mind could sense

> plans being made...

> < No, Yeerk. No. >

> < Survival of the fittest, human. And having a weapon will make my survival easier. >

> < Not Dad. Please, not Dad. >

> "SS," the Yeerk mused. "It's an old Nazi dagger. Grandpa G must have taken it off a dead soldier as a souvenir. Cool."

> "What're you going to do with it?" Jake asked curiously.

> The Yeerk cocked my head, calculating.

> < Not Jake, Yeerk. Not my brother, too. >

> "I mean, you can't take it," Jake said, hurriedly, like he could read the Yeerk's thoughts. "It isn't yours."

> < Such a child. > "Hey, you get the medals, I get the dagger, right? It's perfect. You can sit around thinking about honor and

bravery and all, and I get the weapon than gets the job done. Sounds fair to me."

> Jake put the medals away. "I'm not taking anything until I talk to Mom and Grandma." He looked at me. "Come on, man, put it back."

> "Mom and Grandma," the Yeerk mocked. "You're still such a kid. You think everything is so simple, don't you? That it's all either right of wrong, black or white. A good guy, a bad guy, and nothing in between."

> < I think you underestimate humans, Yeerk. >

> < Do I? > The Yeerk gave a mental snort.

> < Humans have hidden strengths. You have only begun to see some of them. >

> "Sometimes even the good guys do bad things," Jake said, looking me straight in the eye. "Doesn't mean there's no difference between good and evil."

> "Good and evil," the Yeerk smirked. "Strong and weak. That's the reality. Winners and losers."

> "The knife, Tom," Jake said tiredly.

> The Yeerk laid it back in the footlocker and turned off the light. But we didn't go to sleep yet.

> The plan was just starting.

>

THE END...or is it only part?

End
file.